

TRANSITION SERVICES PLANNER

*A Guide for Students
and Their Families*



*Planning for Work
and Adult Living*



Vocational Rehabilitation
Quality Employment Solutions

Table of Contents

A Guide for Students and Their Families	1
Understanding Transition	2
What is transition?	
What is transition planning?	
What are transition services?	
Why is transition planning important?	
Transition to Independence	
Know Yourself	4
What is your role?	
What is your family's role?	
How do you and your family make this happen?	
Transition Illustrated	
Understanding the World of Work	8
What do you and your family need to know?	
Successful Employment	
Options for Employment	
How do you and your family make this happen?	
Transition Illustrated	
Understanding the World of Adult Living	12
What do you and your family need to know?	
Community Living Options	
What does your family need to know?	
How do you and your family make this happen?	
Transition Illustrated	
Setting Goals	16
What do you and your family need to consider?	
How do you and your family make this happen?	
Transition Illustrated	
Developing Your Plan	20
What do you and your family need to know?	
Adult Living Skills	
Gaining Work Experience	
Post-Secondary Education	
A Transition Plan	
How do you and your family make this happen?	
Transition Illustrated	
Following Your Plan	28
What do you and your family need to know?	
What do we mean by the terms self-determination and self-advocacy?	
How do you and your family make this happen?	
Transition Illustrated	
Reaching Goals	32
Employment and Independent Living	
Transition to Independence: A Summary	
Adult Agency Services	34
Vocational Rehabilitation Services	
Developmental Disabilities System Services	
Behavioral Health Services	
Resources	38
General Resources	
Adult Service Agencies	
Post-Secondary Education	
Advocacy and Support	

TRANSITION SERVICES PLANNER

A Guide for Students and Their Families



The purpose of this Transition Services Planner is to provide information for students with disabilities and their families that will assist the student in transitioning from school to work and adult living.

Information is provided to assist students and families in understanding how they can work together with schools, Vocational Rehabilitation, and other agencies to help the student during the transition years. The planner may be used to learn about transition and the steps involved in the transition planning process. Suggestions are made for action that might be taken to assist with the process. Space is provided for students and families to make notes on the steps they wish to take during the transition years. The planner also provides information regarding resources that may be useful during the transition years.

There is a lot of information provided in this planner and it may be overwhelming as you begin to read it. Don't be discouraged by that. Take the information a little bit at a time and pick up the planner periodically as you have questions or find that you need guidance.

It is not intended that you will read through this once and learn everything you need to know about transition. Just as transition planning is an ongoing process, learning about transition is also an ongoing process.

Throughout this planner are stories of young adults in Nebraska who participated in transition planning during their high school years. The stories are intended to illustrate the importance of transition planning and show how it worked for these students. While these are actual stories, the names have been changed to protect their privacy. Transition planning is an individualized process and is going to differ from one student to another. These stories and the information in this planner will not give the answer for any one student, but should serve as a source of ideas for students and parents as they embark on their own transition planning path.

UNDERSTANDING TRANSITION



*Effective
transition planning
assists students in
school by involving
them in meaningful
activities to prepare
for adult living
after their
high school
years.*

What is Transition?

Transition is the term for the “bridge” between school and adult life for students. This is the process of preparing students for life after high school and includes planning for post-secondary education or training, employment, and community living.

What is Transition Planning?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law that addresses educational requirements for students with disabilities. Changes to the law, effective in July 2005, require that, no later than the age of 16, a student’s Individual Education Program (IEP) is to identify goals related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills to prepare the student for life after high school. These goals must be based on assessments appropriate for the student’s age. The IEP must also identify the transition services needed to assist the student in reaching those goals.

Assessing the student, establishing goals, and identifying needed services provides the basis for a transition plan that focuses on how instruction and community experiences will be provided to prepare the student for adult living and employment. In addition to planning and receiving information about services available

while in school, students and their families should receive relevant information about community services or agencies that may be able to assist them after they leave high school.

The transition plan may also serve as a bridge for other plans the student may need to develop after high school. These other plans might include the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), which is a planning tool used by Vocational Rehabilitation to help individuals plan for employment success. Another plan used in adult services is the Individual Program Plan (IPP), developed for those receiving services within the Developmental Disabilities System. Other adult agencies often use similar planning tools. An effective transition plan during high school will provide the foundation for developing future plans such as these.

What are Transition Services?

Transition services include activities and supports designed to lead the student to identify his/her interests and strengths and to begin to work on the skills needed to be successful in employment and adult living. Transition services and supports can be provided by a variety of sources including schools, families, community members, and agency providers. By setting goals, developing a plan to meet those goals, and participating in transition services, the student begins the process to prepare for life after high school.

Transition to Independence

Why is Transition Planning Important?

Transition planning, beginning early, helps students explore what they want for themselves following high school. Effective transition planning assists students in school by involving them in meaningful activities to prepare them for adult living.

A transition plan is designed to accomplish the following:

- Work with the student and his or her family to think about goals for life after high school and to develop a plan to get there.

- Design the high school experience to ensure that the student gains the skills needed to achieve his or her desired goals for life after high school.
- Identify and link the student and family to any needed services, supports or programs before the student leaves the school system.

Making the transition to adult life and independence is a process that involves a series of steps. The “Transition to Independence” chart below represents those steps and includes:

Know Yourself – identifying and communicating the student’s interests, preferences, strengths, and needs.

Understand the World of Work – understanding what is needed to be a successful employee and what options for employment might be available.

Understand the World of Adult Living – understanding the skills needed to live in the adult world and options for living in the community.

Set a Goal – identifying broad goals for the future, including plans for independent living and employment.

Develop Your Plan – developing a transition plan to learn skills necessary for independent living and employment.

Follow Your Plan – putting the plan in motion by participating in transition activities.

This planner will discuss each of these steps in greater detail. Included is information regarding the roles of the student and family as they move through the transition to independence.



What is Your Role?



As a student, you may or may not have had the opportunity to take part in developing your Individual Education Program (IEP). If you haven't been involved before, now is the time. You should know that your school is required to develop an IEP for you that includes a plan for transition beginning at age 16. This means that they must identify what needs to happen during high school to prepare you for life after high school. In order for this plan to be meaningful for you, you need to participate in the IEP and help others understand you.

- Think about your future and what you want it to be. If you don't know, talk with others to help give you ideas.
- Think about what kinds of things you like to do. What are you good at doing?
- Be sure you understand your disability and the challenges that it may present for you. What kind of supports might you need? This will be an important piece in developing your goals.

*Most importantly,
you need to remember
that IEPs are your
meetings and others
are there to help.*

As a member of your IEP team, you need to:

Get Involved!

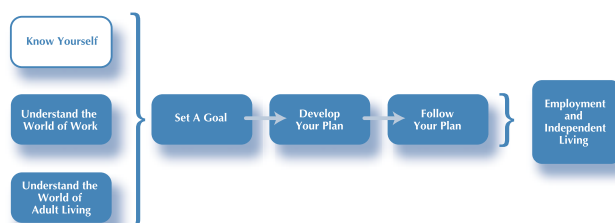
Go to the IEP team meeting. Show up on time and be ready to do your part. Take an active role and be prepared. Think about what you want your life to be like after you leave school. Be part of the discussion and decisions.

Share Information!

Tell others what you do well and what you'll need help with. If you're not sure what you want, tell them that, too. Learning about different possibilities can be the first step of your plan. Make sure you help the team understand what you're thinking.

Ask Questions!

This is your plan for the future. If there's anything you don't understand, ask!



What is Your Family's Role?

There are many things that family members can do to assist in transition planning. Some tips to get you started are:

- Remember that no one knows your son or daughter as well as you do. Offer information and assistance to the IEP team.
- Help your student identify his or her own strengths and needs. Knowing what the student is interested in and his or her likes and dislikes (preferences) are also important in developing a plan that works.
- Talk with your son or daughter about the future and what he or she wants it to be. Share your vision for their future.

It's important that you and your son or daughter communicate between yourselves and with members of the IEP team. Students who feel comfortable expressing themselves within their family are more likely to feel comfortable expressing their thoughts with others.

You can help them develop their communication skills in these ways:

- Help your son or daughter learn about his or her disability. This understanding will help him or her feel more comfortable in asking for supports, if needed.
- Provide opportunities for your son or daughter to advocate (speak up) for his or her own needs, express his or her own desires, and learn his or her own strengths.
- Encourage your son or daughter to ask questions.

*Talk with
your son
or daughter
about the
future
and what
he or she
wants
it to be.*

RESOURCE TIP

The Nebraska Department of Education's Transition website contains information regarding transition and transition initiatives in the state. Visit the site at <http://www.nde.state.ne.us> and click on "Special Education" and then "Transition".

How Do You and Your Family Make This Happen?

Suggestions for Action

Talk with others.

Spend time talking with those who know you well to help you identify your interests, strengths, and needs, and determine what you want for the future. People who can assist with this may include your parents or other family members, teachers, counselors, friends, or employers.

Complete surveys/assessments.

Interest surveys or other assessments completed at school may help in the process of deciding what you want for the future. The need for surveys and assessments can be identified in your IEP and completed as part of classroom activities, either individually or in a group, as appropriate. You may be able to work with Vocational Rehabilitation to complete assessments such as these.

Identifying Your Own Action Steps

Do you wish to talk with others to assist in identifying your interests, strengths, and needs? If so, determine who you will talk to and decide how this will be arranged.

Talk with the IEP team about surveys or assessments that might be useful. If these would be helpful, make a plan for getting them done.



Suggestions for Action

Understand your disability.

You and your family need to understand the nature of your disability and what challenges it presents. Understanding your limitations can help you begin to identify ways to deal with the challenges and build on your strengths. Parents and teachers may be able to provide materials or activities that explain the disability in a way you will understand. If possible, meeting others with a similar disability can help you see that you're not alone and may also show you how others meet their challenges.

Practice communication.

Communication can begin early when families encourage their members to speak up at home and by really listening when they do. You can practice communicating with others in day-to-day activities in the community, such as making purchases, asking for directions, or participating in social activities. Your family and school can teach good social skills to help you learn how to respond to others in a positive, polite manner.

Identifying Your Own Action Steps

Do you and your family have a good understanding of your disability? Ask your IEP team if there are classroom activities or materials that you can use in your home that would help with this understanding. Is there an individual or group of individuals (such as an advocacy group) that would be helpful? Make a plan to get information that's needed.

Are there opportunities for you to practice communication and social skills? If more practice is needed, how might this be done?

Transition Illustrated

Having an IEP team that listened to him and careful planning during high school led Jake to find the job that was right for him. When he graduated from high school, he was prepared to work in his chosen field.

Jake had always been interested in the construction business because his father and grandfather worked in that area. When Jake expressed this interest to his team, they decided to see what they could do to make a construction job a reality for him.

Jake's high school curriculum was designed to help him gain the skills he needed for a job in construction. During high school, he took shop classes and worked at the local hardware store, gaining valuable experience. Vocational evaluations and training in interviewing skills provided by Vocational Rehabilitation were activities that helped Jake land a job after graduation.

Jake is now the foreman of a siding crew for a home-builder. This is what he knew he wanted to do and just what he worked toward in high school.

Because he knew himself and because of the work he did in high school, he is in a job that he says he loves!

UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD OF WORK

What Do You and Your Family Need to Know?



Successful Employment

There are many skills required in the world of work that can be practiced during your high school years. It is important that your family and school recognize the traits and skills needed to be successful employees so that they can teach and reinforce these in your everyday life. Persons close to you can model the skills necessary for successful employment by demonstrating their own work ethic through positive attitudes and behaviors. You can learn a lot by observing others who are good employees.

Employers agree that persons who exhibit the following traits and skills are bound to be successful on the job:

Personal Skills and Traits

- Dependable
- Treats others well
- Free from substance abuse
- Flexible
- Responsible
- Honest
- Respects others
- Good listener

Job-Related Skills

- On time for work
- Follows directions
- Good attendance
- Takes pride in work
- Willing to learn
- Uses common sense
- Shows initiative
- Accurate in work
- Follows work rules

Teamwork Skills

- Exhibits problem solving skills
- Works well with others
- Cooperates as part of team
- Completes tasks on time
- Shows enthusiasm for work
- Works with minimum supervision

Options for Employment

As you and your family begin to plan for your employment future after high school, there are a number of options to consider. Based on your needs and interests, the transition planning process should assist in determining which path to take to employment. Possibilities include moving directly into a job, enrolling in a post-secondary school or training program, or combining a job with school or training.



Some of the employment options you and family may wish to consider are:

Competitive Employment

Many individuals with disabilities can get and keep a job without any special ongoing support services. This is called competitive employment. Competitive jobs are found within public or private business or industry. Individuals may enter these jobs directly or may enter them after completing certain education or training requirements.

Supported Employment

Many individuals with disabilities can be prepared to work in the community after receiving specific training or participating in a training program. This may include on-the-job training for a short period or ongoing assistance that allows them to work in the community. This type of assistance is called “supported employment”. Supported employment may include the use of a job coach. A job coach is someone who helps the person learn how to do the job in the way that is best for that person. Job coaches are typically employed by adult service agencies. More information about adult service agencies is provided on pages 34-37 of this planner.

Day Activity Programs

Day activity programs, including sheltered workshops, are operated by adult service agencies and provide individuals with more significant disabilities an opportunity to develop skills. Individuals may receive training in pre-vocational skills, perform limited work in that setting for pay, or participate in other activities appropriate for their skills.

This description only begins to describe the possibilities available as you plan for your employment future. The key is to develop a plan that best meets your needs and interests in order to make it a success.

*You and
your family
should
understand
what is
needed to be
a successful
employee and
what options
for employment
are available.*

RESOURCE TIP

“**Making It Work**” is a publication produced by Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation that provides information regarding transition planning. It is intended for students with disabilities and their families. To view and subscribe to the publication, go to <http://www.vocrehab.state.ne.us> and click on “Publications” or contact Vocational Rehabilitation toll free at 1-877-637-3422.

UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD OF WORK

How Do You and Your Family Make This Happen?

Suggestions for Action

Learn job-related skills.

This includes skills such as being on time, dressing appropriately, and being interested in doing a good job. These skills can be practiced in everyday situations when going to school or participating in activities in the community.

Practice good social skills.

This includes accepting constructive criticism, being polite, and responding appropriately to authority. School is a great place to learn and reinforce these skills. The daily interactions that take place at school, at home, and in the community provide many opportunities to practice. Family members and others may demonstrate these skills by being a good role model.

Identifying Your Own Action Steps

Job-related skills don't have to be taught on the job. How can you practice these skills in everyday situations?

Getting along with others is an important skill, both on or off the job. Do you need to practice your social skills? How can these be practiced?



Suggestions for Action

Understand employment options.

As you begin to think about what kind of employment might be right for you, it's important that you understand the options that are available. Identifying interests, skills, and abilities is the first step toward planning an employment future. Your family and school can assist in providing awareness of employment opportunities so that you know what's available.

Learn about help that is available.

The school is the first resource for assisting with employment planning. A variety of activities may be provided by the school or in cooperation with Vocational Rehabilitation to help you gain awareness about employment opportunities. Find out about adult agency services that may be needed in the future. Referrals for these services should be made early in the high school years, so find out about them now.

Identifying Your Own Action Steps

Talk about your employment future after high school. Is it reasonable to think that you will be ready to move directly into a job or will further education or training be the best option? Will you be able to work independently or is it likely that some type of support will be needed to hold a job?

Find out what kinds of activities the school offers to expose students to the world of work. Are there other activities, part-time jobs, or volunteer experiences that might help you gain experience? Ask whether a referral to Vocational Rehabilitation or other adult agencies for future services might be appropriate.

Transition Illustrated

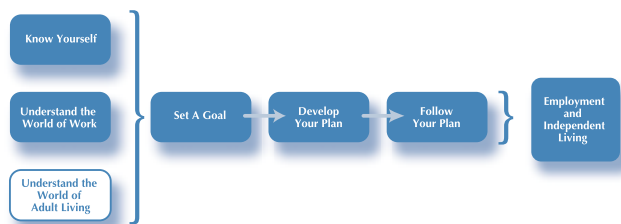
Jessica was diagnosed with myotonic muscular dystrophy at age nine. At that early age, her parents weren't thinking about her future career. But when they were ready, they were able to develop a plan that worked for her.

They were ready during Jessica's junior year in high school. Her fast-food experience didn't offer the career she wanted when she graduated, so she worked with her parents, school, and Vocational Rehabilitation (Voc Rehab) to start a career plan. Her father says that starting early was important "because, as parents, we were wondering what her future role would be, as far as a career."

While still in school, Voc Rehab worked with Jessica to assess her skills and interests. Through a cooperative training program offered by Voc Rehab and Omaha Marriott, she participated in six weeks of classroom and hands-on training. Jessica was eventually placed in a position in Marriott's reservations department.

Transition planning during high school led to a good job for Jessica and provided an answer for her parents' questions about what her future role would be.

UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD OF ADULT LIVING



What Do You and Your Family Need to Know?



The key is to design an arrangement that meets your needs and allows you as much independence as possible.

In order to plan for your future, it's important that you think about where you want to live after you're through with high school. Do you want to continue to live at home or are you planning to live in the community? Do you want to live alone, with a roommate, or will you need to be in a place that can give you the supports you need? It's hard to know what's right for you unless you're aware of the options that are available.

Community Living Options

The type of living arrangement you select should be based on your preferences, abilities, and needs. It should also take into consideration the level of supports that are available to assist you. All of these factors will need to go into the decision as to which option is best.

Following is a general description of types of community living arrangements that may be considered. Keep in mind that this is only a general description and that there are certainly other options that may be available. A combination of these options may be the best choice.

Living arrangements may need to change over time as your needs and circumstances change.

Family – Living with family may be an appropriate option for you as you graduate from high school. This will depend on your family's situation and the needs and preferences of you and your family. Future living arrangements should be discussed, given the reality that living with your family may not be an option that is appropriate or available for a lifetime.

Independent Living – You may be able to live independently in your own home or apartment, either alone or with roommates. In this arrangement, you would require little or no assistance for daily living. If assistance is needed, family members or an adult service agency may be able to provide the supports you need.

Supervised Living – Supervised living provides structure and support for those who need it. This may include assistance and training to help learn independent living skills, such as meal planning and preparation, general household cleaning, money management, and accessing the community. These services are typically provided by adult service agencies in a variety of settings and offer various levels of support depending upon your needs.

RESOURCE TIP

If you have questions or concerns about disability issues, you may contact the Hotline for Disability Services/Client Assistance Program toll free at 1-800-742-7594 or in Lincoln at 402-471-0801 or e-mail shari.bahensky@cap.ne.gov. Information about the program may be found on the website at <http://www.cap.state.ne.us>.

Group Living – Group homes are operated by adult service agencies and provide continuous support and supervision of individuals in the community. Agency staff members work with the individuals to provide training in independent living skills. Individuals living in group homes may work or receive training in the community and access community resources for recreation, medical, and other needed services.

Adult Family Homes – This type of living arrangement may have different names in different communities. In general, this refers to a living arrangement where the individual lives in a private family home in the community. The family provides room and board for the individual and assists him or her in participating in community activities.

What Does Your Family Need to Know?

When looking at the options for community living, it is important to determine as early as possible whether your son or daughter will need services or supports from adult agencies after high school. Agencies such as Vocational Rehabilitation and the Developmental Disabilities System have specific criteria that must be met in order to be eligible for their services.

Funding is limited and services may be provided only as funds are available. Starting the application process early to determine the eligibility of your son or daughter will provide you information about the available options and help you avoid surprises later. Further information about adult agency services is provided on pages 34-37 of this planner.

On a more personal note, it's important for you to address your feelings about the future. It may be hard for you to think of your son or daughter leaving home. For some, depending on the disability and needs, living on their own may not be an option. Some type of supports may always be needed, whether provided by family or through other formal or informal supports.

For others, living independently may be a realistic goal, but one that will require work and planning to achieve. It's also very possible that it's too early to know what your son or daughter will be capable of doing a few years from now. Whatever the case, it is important to begin talking about this early and put together a plan for the future. It's never too early to work on the skills needed to help your son or daughter become as independent as possible.

*You and
your family
should
understand the
skills needed
to live in the
adult world
and begin to
explore
options for
living in the
community.*

UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD OF ADULT LIVING

How Do You and Your Family Make This Happen?

Suggestions for Action

Talk!

Open, honest discussions of the expectations, hopes, and dreams of you and your family are important in determining what work needs to be done to lead you to a life where you can live as independently as possible. Understanding what each other sees for the future is a good place to start.

Experience!

You can't know what to expect of life after high school without being exposed to the realities of day-to-day living. Your family and school can provide experiences for you to learn what it takes to live in the adult world. Participating in routine activities that go along with maintaining a household and living in the community can be an effective way of learning and practicing the many skills that are needed to live independently.

Identifying Your Own Action Steps

You and those close to you should begin to think about the expectations for where you will live after high school. Share those thoughts with each other.

You, your family, and other members of your IEP team need to think about activities that might help you gain an understanding of the skills needed for independent living. How might these activities be provided in your home, school, or community?



Suggestions for Action

Understand options for independent living.

As you and your family begin to think about what kind of living arrangement might be right for you after high school, it's important to understand the options that are available. Your preferences, skills, and abilities will need to be matched to the appropriate type of living arrangement.

Gather information about adult services.

If it's possible you will require services from an adult agency to help you live in the community, it's not too early to begin to gather information about those services. There are no guarantees that services will be available when you complete high school. There are specific eligibility criteria and funding for services is limited, so referrals are encouraged early. Information regarding adult agency services may be found on pages 34-37 of this planner.

Identifying Your Own Action Steps

You and your family may need to observe first-hand the various types of community living arrangements. For instance, if you might need assistance from an adult agency in order to live in the community, ask one of those agencies if you can visit and observe their services.

Talk with IEP team members about the types of adult agency services that are available and that might be appropriate for you. Find out what their eligibility requirements are and what types of services they offer. Develop a plan for contacting agencies that may provide needed services.

Transition Illustrated

Support from her family, a variety of job experiences while in high school, and working with others to develop goals for her future has provided good results for Jennifer. While attending high school, Jennifer participated in work experience programs that included working in a daycare center, school cafeteria, and the school office. In addition to gaining valuable work experience, Jennifer received class credits and was paid for her work.

This "hands-on" experience gave Jennifer an understanding of the world of work and showed others her skills and abilities.

Jennifer also worked with Vocational Rehabilitation and a Service Coordinator from the Developmental Disabilities System during high school to begin planning for her future. Vocational Rehabilitation helped Jennifer identify the types of jobs she was interested in. Jennifer wishes to live on her own someday and has requested residential services from the Developmental Disabilities System. While there are no guarantees that funding for residential services will be available for Jennifer when the time comes, it is wise that she made the request for services early.

The hard work and planning for employment paid off when Jennifer began a job in the housekeeping department of a local hotel. Jennifer enjoys her job and the people she works with. Her long range goals for the future include full-time employment and living on her own in the community. By all indications so far, it appears that she's on the right path to meeting these goals.

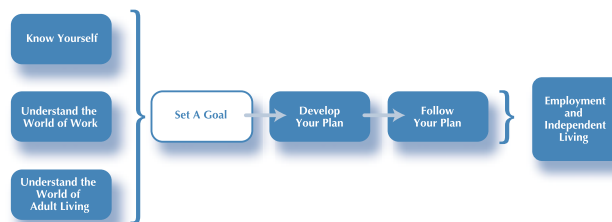
SETTING GOALS

What Do You and Your Family Need to Consider?

It is unlikely that you will know exactly what it is you want to do after completing high school. However, you and your family may be surprised to find that you have a pretty good idea of the broad goals for your future. A goal simply tells the general direction the person is headed. Identifying goals provides the foundation for designing a high school experience that is meaningful and prepares you for life after high school.

In order to decide the general direction you are headed and begin to identify broad goals, you and your family need to think about what's important. When trying to decide what type of living arrangement and employment might be best after high school, it's helpful to first determine what the priorities are for you and your family. Priorities might be based upon factors such as:

- Ensuring health and safety
- Providing opportunities for you to be as independent as possible
- Living within your financial means
- Maintaining relationships with people who are important to you
- Providing opportunities for you to grow and learn



While you may not know exactly what type of job you want after high school or where you want to live, it is important to identify broad goals in order to design a high school experience that will prepare you for the adult world. Deciding what's important is critical to setting achievable goals that will work for you.

Thinking and talking about priorities such as these gives the IEP team a place to start when developing goals. Having broad goals helps determine what kinds of activities should take place in high school.

An example of a broad goal could be one that includes plans to continue with education beyond high school. Another broad goal might identify your desire to eventually live independently in your own home or apartment.

You need to think about what you want life to be like after leaving high school.

If you have the goal of continuing education after graduation, your high school coursework can be designed to meet the requirements for admission to a post-secondary program. If your goal is to live independently, opportunities can be provided throughout your high school years to learn skills needed to do this.

Identify your goals for the future, including plans for independent living and employment. This will allow you, your family, and other members of your IEP team to plan your high school experience so that you are on your way to meeting those goals.

You should begin to identify your goals for the future, including plans for independent living and employment.

RESOURCE TIP

The Education Quest Foundation assists students and families in planning for college. Assistance is provided to help prepare for college, apply for financial aid, locate scholarships, etc. Information may be obtained by visiting the website at www.educationquest.org or by calling 1-800-666-3721.

SETTING GOALS

How Do You and Your Family Make This Happen?

Suggestions for Action

Identify what's important.

You may have a number of goals for the future. Some of these goals will be more important than others. It may be too difficult or overwhelming to work on all of the goals at once. Once you and your family work with your IEP team to identify the goals that are most important to you, those goals can be worked on first.

Identifying Your Own Action Steps

Think about what is important to you when deciding on goals for a living arrangement or employment. Consider factors such as amount of assistance or support that you will need, location, transportation, education or training, etc. Are any of these factors more important than others?

*Think about what is
important to you when
deciding on goals for
a living arrangement
or employment.*



Suggestions for Action

Determine what's realistic.

It's important to have dreams about the future, even if some of those dreams may not appear to be realistic. Identifying your dreams and determining if and how they might be achieved is a necessary step in planning for the future.

Identify both short-term and long-term goals.

It may take a long time and a lot of work to reach certain goals. Breaking them down into steps that can be worked on immediately (short-term) and steps that will need to be worked on later (long-term) can keep it from feeling like an impossible task.

Identifying Your Own Action Steps

Do you and your family feel that your goals are realistic for you? Talk about these and decide how you might be able to meet these goals. Decide what is reasonable to expect that you can do or will eventually be able to do on your own and what might require assistance.

Work with your family and other members of your IEP team to break your goals down into manageable steps. It might be logical to think of them in terms of time. What might you want to achieve during the early years of high school? In the later years of high school? In 3-5 years after high school? Another way to break goals down is to decide if there are certain things that have to be achieved before others can be worked on. This involves building on skills as you learn.

Transition Illustrated

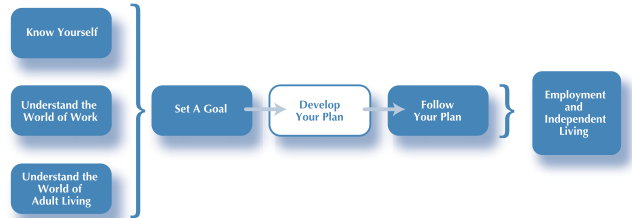
When Kim was younger, she thought she would like to have a job either working with children or working with computers. These were broad goals that she eventually narrowed down through experiences she gained during her high school years.

Kim's interest in working with children began as a result of babysitting opportunities. Then, while attending high school, she took a Human Development class that required students to complete observations in childcare centers. It was then that she knew for sure that this was the career she wanted. Her Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist assisted by having her complete assessments to help identify her strengths and interests.

These assessments reinforced the notion that Kim would do well in a position in the field of childcare.

Once Kim had decided on an employment goal of working with children, she was able to participate in a number of work experiences during high school that would prepare her for work in this field after graduation. She began work in a childcare center just a few days after graduating as a result of this preparation. She now says that this is what she wants to keep doing forever, stating "I wouldn't want to do anything else." Setting a goal early and working to achieve that goal obviously worked for Kim!

DEVELOPING YOUR PLAN



What Do You and Your Family Need to Know?

For students with disabilities, it is especially important that priority be given to learning skills needed to function in the adult world. Transition planning involves looking at the skills you will need as an adult and developing a plan that teaches those skills. This includes looking at what's needed to prepare you for independent living, employment, and post-secondary education. While it may seem early to be thinking about some of these things in your first years of high school, remember that it may take a lot of time and practice to master the skills and to coordinate the services and supports you may need.

Adult Living Skills

Areas that need to be considered when thinking about living independently include:

Advocacy – Advocacy is being able to tell others about what you need. This includes understanding your disability and what it means for you. If you're not prepared to advocate (speak up) for yourself, is there someone you trust to assist you?

Relationships – Being connected with other people is an important part of living in the community. Will you be able to stay in touch with people who are important in your life? It takes certain skills to maintain positive, healthy relationships with others. Can you do this on your own or do you need support?

Health and medical – It is important that you learn about your medical needs and what part you, as an adult, can safely manage so that you stay healthy. This may include skills such as taking medications, getting to doctor's appointments, knowing how to get help, and making sure you are covered by health insurance. You may need to identify someone you trust to help manage some or all of your medical needs.

Independent living skills – These are the skills needed to run a household. This includes tasks such as meal planning, grocery shopping, cooking, cleaning, and laundry. Can you do these things on your own or will you need help?

Personal management skills – These are the skills necessary for you to manage your everyday life. This can include things such as transportation and money management. How will you get where you need to go? How will you pay your bills and manage your money?



Finances and income – Money matters are important. You must be sure you have enough money to live on. This includes money needed for rent, food, household expenses, clothing, and recreation. Will you need assistance to make ends meet? Can you manage this on your own or do you need help?

Recreation and leisure – You can't overlook the need to have fun. It's important that you have opportunities to participate in recreational activities in the community. Will you have access to things you like to do? Will you need help from others in order to get out in the community and have fun?

After identifying the type of living arrangement you are preparing for and the skills that you will need, a plan needs to be developed to teach those skills. There are many opportunities to learn the skills needed for adult living. Some of this learning can take place in classrooms and some can occur in the home and community. In addition to academic skills, functional skills related to independent living can be learned in the classroom. For instance, math skills can be used to work on developing a budget or balancing a checkbook.

And of course, the classroom, the home, and the community are all excellent places to learn and practice good social skills, such as working and communicating with others and being courteous.

Gaining Work Experience

An effective transition plan for employment needs to include opportunities for you to experience the world of work. That experience can be a big help when it's time to figure out your employment future. Work experience can come in a variety of forms. This may include holding a part-time job during high school, doing volunteer work in the community, talking with and observing others on their jobs, and taking part in activities that provide information about employment.

*An effective
transition
plan should
provide you
the opportunity
to learn skills
necessary for
independent
living and
employment.*

DEVELOPING YOUR PLAN



Part-time Jobs

Part-time jobs can help you learn skills that will be helpful during high school and beyond. They can also allow you to explore a variety of jobs to help you decide on a future career path. The responsibilities of holding a job will help you gain confidence and will provide an opportunity to meet new people and make connections with others in the community. And, of course, earning a paycheck is an extra benefit!

Volunteer Work

Volunteer work can help you gain new skills and develop a feel for how you work best. Sometimes, volunteer work can lead to employment in the same area or with the same organization. At the very least, volunteer work is a way to meet new people and make connections with others. Employers and colleges are looking for well-rounded people and volunteer work shows that the person cares about making a difference in the community.

Job Shadowing

Job shadowing means observing someone “on the job”. A lot can be learned about the jobs of others by talking with them and seeing first-hand what it is they do on a day-to-day basis.

You may even be able to talk with or job shadow with someone who has a disability similar to your own to see how this impacts their job.

Informational Activities

Schools and Vocational Rehabilitation can offer a variety of group activities that will provide information about jobs. Examples of these activities include:

- Participating in classroom activities that provide exposure to different jobs
- Attending career days
- Participating in tours of community businesses
- Attending job fairs
- Attending presentations regarding employment
- Participating in group discussions regarding employment

The primary responsibility for these transition activities rests with the schools during your early years of high school. Depending on the situation, schools may also refer individual students or groups of students to Vocational Rehabilitation. Further information on transition services available through Vocational Rehabilitation is provided on page 35 of this planner.

Post-Secondary Education

The development of a transition plan needs to address the question of whether you will continue with education after high school (also referred to as post-secondary education). You and your family will likely need information to help you consider this option. Here are some of the questions students frequently ask.

Do I want to continue to go to school once I've completed high school?

Depending on the kind of job you want or your interests and experiences, further education may be the right choice. Many jobs require a certain level of education that goes beyond high school. Even if you're not looking for a degree or training in a specific field, there is a lot to be learned by attending classes.

What's available?

Community colleges or vocational/tech schools teach students a specific occupation or trade. This may include studying areas such as construction, food service, computer programming, human services, healthcare services, etc. Colleges or universities provide specialized training and education in a particular field of study. Areas of study that are available in these settings are varied and too numerous to mention here.

Can a post-secondary school deny my admission because I have a disability?

No, a school may not refuse to admit you simply because you have a disability. You must, however, meet their admission requirements just like everyone else.

What are the admission requirements?

Unlike high school, where schools are required to provide you with an education, you must apply for and meet requirements to be admitted into post-secondary education. In addition to high school coursework requirements, tests such as the ACT, SAT, ASSET, and COMPASS are commonly used to determine admission.

Can I get assistance (referred to as accommodations) in order to help me in the post-secondary program?

You may need accommodations to take the tests to get admitted into college, as well as accommodations to help you once you're in college. Examples of accommodations include: books on tape, taped lectures, note takers, interpreters, Braille or text enlargers, or extended time for tests and exams. If you can provide the required documentation to show how your disability affects your learning, you may be eligible to get help. Guidance regarding the documentation that may be needed is contained in a document titled, "Re-Evaluation Issues for Transition Students."

This may be found on the Nebraska Department of Education website referenced on page 38 of this planner.

What kind of planning do I need to do to be ready for school after high school?

If you're interested in attending some type of post-secondary program after high school, you should begin working with a counselor at your school as early as possible to find out what the admissions requirements are. Then, you can plan your class schedule for your high school years to make sure you'll be able to meet the coursework and testing requirements. You may also want to begin early to visit the colleges or vocational schools you're interested in to help determine which one is right for you.

Remember that going to college is a big step for all students. For students with disabilities, the planning and decisions are likely to be more complicated. Because of this, you may want to start the process early to prevent any last minute surprises.

DEVELOPING YOUR PLAN

A Transition Plan



There isn't necessarily a specific form or format that guarantees a good transition plan. It's the thought and planning that goes into the development that will determine its success. Planning for your employment future may be done through career awareness and career exploration activities. Transition plans should include goals related to community participation, social relationships, post-secondary education, as well as recreational and independent living skill instruction and assistance.

Following is a description of a transition planning process focusing on career awareness and exploration that might help illustrate this for you.

John had loved animals since he was small. From family pets to animals at the zoo, he was fascinated. When it came time to talk about John's interests, it was clear that animals were top on his list. His IEP team wasn't exactly sure what his love of animals could lead John to in terms of a career, but they recognized that this was an excellent place to start.

In the classroom, John was provided with opportunities to learn more about animals. Whether preparing an exhibit for the school science fair, planning a speech, or completing research to write a paper, John was encouraged to use topics related to animals.

At home, John was given responsibilities for caring for the family pets. Not only was he in charge of the care and feeding of the animals, but he was responsible for purchasing their food and other supplies in the community. This gave John experience in communicating with others and in handling money.

During his high school years, John's IEP team made sure he had many opportunities to learn about and observe others in careers related to animals. Vocational Rehabilitation staff arranged visits to work sites in the community. He was able to job shadow a veterinarian to see what that career involves. He participated in summer and after-school classes at the zoo in his community to learn about a variety of animals. He also worked as a volunteer at the local Humane Society.

John's IEP team manager provided him with information about classes at the local community college. John and his parents were able to learn more about the college and the admission requirements by meeting admissions staff and taking a tour of the campus during his senior year.

All of these activities served to reinforce John's desire to work with animals as a career. Upon graduation from high school, John began a part-time job assisting in a veterinarian's office. Because John enjoyed school and learning, he decided to take community college classes to continue his education. He hopes that these experiences will later lead to full-time employment in a field related to animals.

By developing a transition plan that worked to identify his interests and provide him with opportunities to explore careers in his area of interest, John is well on his way to meeting his goals for adult life.

A transition plan helps students explore what they want for themselves after high school. Effective transition planning will help you look at how you are today and imagine what will be needed to achieve your dreams tomorrow.

RESOURCE TIP

The Educational Opportunities Beyond High School in Nebraska website provides a comprehensive listing of post-secondary training and educational programs in Nebraska. Visit the site at <http://edweblab.unl.edu/edopportunities/>.

The important thing to remember is that a good transition plan should identify what activities need to take place, both in and out of the classroom, to prepare you for life after high school.

DEVELOPING YOUR PLAN

How Do You and Your Family Make This Happen?

Suggestions for Action

Prepare for the IEP.

You and your family can prepare for IEP meetings by reviewing past IEPs and deciding whether there are things that need to be changed or new topics that need to be talked about. Questions that should be asked at the meeting can be written down so they're not forgotten. Think about who needs to attend the meeting. If assistance is needed to help you or your family communicate with other members of your IEP team, make sure that arrangements are made to get that help.



RESOURCE TIP

Parent Training and Information (PTI) of Nebraska provides parent training and information for families of children and youth with disabilities. To contact them, call toll free at 1-800-284-8520 or find information about them on the web at: <http://www.pti-nebraska.org>.

Identifying Your Own Action Steps

Talk with your family and decide what you want to discuss at the IEP meeting. If needed, make notes to remind yourself. List the people who are important in your life or who are needed to help with communication. Be sure they're invited to the IEP meeting.

Think about the independent living skills you might work on in the classroom, in the community, and at home. What are they and how can they be taught and practiced?

Suggestions for Action

Review Activities.

This is a good time to review the transition activities that have taken place up to this point. Members of your IEP team should have a good idea of what your interests, preferences, strengths, and needs are. There should be an understanding of what skills you need to develop to be prepared for life after high school. Broad goals for the future have been set. Now it's time for you and your team to look at all of these factors and decide how you will learn the skills and have the experiences you need.

Identifying Your Own Action Steps

What opportunities are available to expose you to the world of work? Work with your IEP team to identify people or businesses in the community that might allow you to perform volunteer work, job shadowing, or even provide a part-time job. Are there activities offered through school or Vocational Rehabilitation that you could participate in?

If it's possible you may continue your education after high school in a post-secondary program, ask your school counselor for the admissions requirements for that type of program. What needs to be done to be sure you meet the requirements for admission upon completing high school?

Transition Illustrated

Discovering one's strengths, interests, and abilities can be the key to finding the right job.

Once Megan made this discovery, she began on a path that led her to find a match in a successful career.

Megan took many business and computer classes in high school. Through Vocational Rehabilitation, Megan completed a vocational evaluation to assess her interests, abilities, and aptitudes that helped her identify jobs that would fit for her. This evaluation was used to help develop Megan's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), a tool used by Vocational Rehabilitation to plan for the future.

Once Megan had determined that she'd like to further her studies in the area of computers after high school, her Voc Rehab Counselor assisted her in the next steps. She took the ASSET test, a placement test used by community colleges. Megan attended the local community college, where she received her degree in Information Technology. While attending college, Megan served as an intern in the Information Technology program. Her college preparation and the internship provided her with the experience needed to land her a job as an Applications Technician at a local hospital, where she works installing and troubleshooting software.

Megan worked with others to identify her interests, strengths, and abilities and match them to a career choice. It was finding that match that made all the difference for Megan.

FOLLOWING YOUR PLAN

What Do You and Your Family Need to Know?

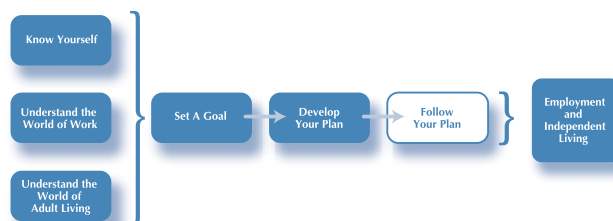
Developing a good transition plan and then following the plan will lead you to achieve the goals you have set for life after high school. It's important to remember that developing and following the transition plan is not a one-time event. In fact, it is required that the IEP be reviewed by the team at least annually to evaluate the results of the plan and determine what changes might be needed. It is an ongoing process that spans many years and may require changing directions a few times along the way. That's all part of the process and is actually a good thing, as it shows that thought and effort are going into the plan.

As you have probably determined by now, there are many benefits to the transition planning process. One benefit we haven't discussed is the opportunity it presents for you to develop self-determination and self-advocacy skills.

What do we mean by the terms “self-determination” and “self-advocacy”?

We've stressed that you need to be given many opportunities to make decisions about your life. This is supported by the concept of self-determination. The idea behind self-determination is that everyone should have a right to direct their own life. Students who develop self-determination skills during their transition years have a better chance of being successful in adulthood. Self-determination begins with encouraging students to take an active role in planning their future.

Self-determination is believing you can control your own destiny. It means making choices on your own, learning how to solve problems, and taking responsibility for yourself and your actions. In accepting responsibility for your actions, you must experience and accept the consequences for the choices you make.



*Self-determination
is believing
you can control
your own destiny.*

Another critical element required for you to live independently is to be able to advocate for yourself.

Self-advocacy means that you are able to tell others what you need and what you want. This takes practice, particularly for a person with a disability. Sometimes others think they should “take care” of people with disabilities and have not allowed them to take responsibility or experience the consequences of their actions and decisions. The transition years should be planned to give you many opportunities to make decisions and choices or advocate for yourself.

An effective transition plan should provide you with many opportunities to learn and practice self-determination and self-advocacy skills. If you are given opportunities to use these skills before you leave high school, you will be better prepared for working and living in your community.

RESOURCE TIP

Nebraska Workforce Development is a one-stop resource for workers and employers. It provides a variety of services including referral, job placement, assessment, and career counseling services. For more information, visit the website at <http://www.dol.state.ne.us/nwd> or contact the office in Lincoln at (402) 471-2275.

*As a
student,
you will
put the plan
in motion by
participating
in transition
activities.*

FOLLOWING YOUR PLAN

How Do You and Your Family Make This Happen?

Suggestions for Action

Get Experience!

The most effective learning takes place when an individual is provided with experiences in the real world. This may involve taking risks and may result in making mistakes. This doesn't mean that all limits and structure should be removed, but does mean that you should be given opportunities to make choices and decisions. Those decisions may not always be the correct ones, but you are likely to learn valuable lessons from the consequences.



Identifying Your Own Action Steps

By following the transition plan, you should be given many opportunities to practice the skills needed for the adult world. Some of the activities that should take place during the transition years include:

- Allowing you to make choices about things such as clothing and social activities
- Involving you in making decisions in the home and in the classroom
- Allowing you to make mistakes and experience natural consequences
- Encouraging you to speak up about needs and wants
- Providing you with information about your disability
- Providing you with opportunities to participate in work experience activities
- Providing you with opportunities to participate in community and school activities
- Encouraging you to complete household chores
- Giving you responsibility for your personal care and hygiene needs
- Establishing expectations for completion of classroom assignments and assigned responsibilities.

Transition Illustrated

Daniel is an excellent example of a student who had a smooth transition from high school to a job. Thanks to the careful planning of Daniel, his family, his school, Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Educational Service Unit in his area, Daniel has been employed in a good job since graduation.

Daniel and his family worked as part of the team that developed a well-rounded high school curriculum to meet his academic needs, as well as allowing him to experience working in a variety of businesses. He completed skill and career interest surveys and participated in workshops where he interacted with employers, college officials, and independent living representatives. Through these activities, he found that he was interested in the plumbing business.

By his senior year, Daniel was ready to begin a plumbing apprenticeship with a local electric, plumbing, and heating company. He took evening classes on plumbing codes. After graduation, Daniel was able to continue as an apprentice, learning new skills while on the job.

"I really like what I am doing. My long-range goal is to learn all that I can and become a very good plumber. I know that will take a while, but I am willing to work," said Daniel.

***Thanks to careful planning,
Daniel has been employed in a
good job since graduation.***

Suggestions for Action

Create Opportunities!

Opportunities for decision making can be created by allowing you to explore employment, recreation and other community experiences, with the support of your family, friends, school and others. Allowing you to make decisions about daily activities can provide the experience needed to make bigger decisions about the future when the time comes.

Identifying Your Own Action Steps

Review the transition plan with your IEP team to see if you have the opportunities to experience and practice the skills included in the list on the previous page. If certain skills are not addressed, determine whether they should be. Make changes to the plan, if needed, to assist you in gaining self-determination and self-advocacy skills.

Employment and Independent Living

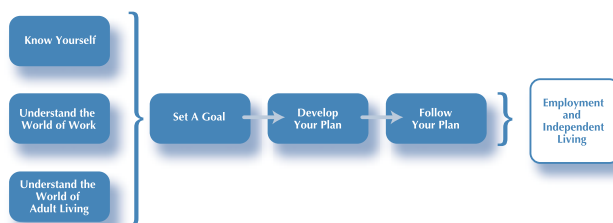


This planner has discussed the importance of identifying your interests, preferences, strengths, and needs as a first step in the transition planning process. It has also discussed the importance of looking at what you see for the future in terms of independent living and employment. It's been stressed that you and your family should have an understanding of what options might be available for living arrangements and jobs once you finish high school. With all of that information in hand, goals can be set and a plan developed to meet those goals.

By following these steps, you should be able to reach your goals for employment and independent living. It may not be a direct path and there are likely to be many adjustments along the way.

Remember that developing and following the transition plan is not a one-time event. Rather, it is an ongoing and ever-changing process that will span your teen years on into adulthood.

At the beginning of this planner, transition was identified as the term for the “bridge” between school and adult life for students with disabilities. By participating in transition planning, services, and activities during the high school years, you will be well on your way in crossing over that bridge.



Transition to Independence: A Summary

Following these steps will support you
in achieving your goals in the areas
of Employment and Independent Living!

Know Yourself

- Identify interests, preferences, strengths and needs
- Get involved in planning
- Communicate!

Understand the World of Work

- Know what's needed to be a successful employee
- Find out what employment options are available

Understand the World of Adult Living

- Learn about options for living in the community
- Determine options appropriate for you

Set A Goal

- Identify broad goals for the future
- Develop goals for independent living and employment

Develop Your Plan

- Develop a plan to learn skills for independent living and employment

Follow Your Plan

- Participate in transition activities
- Review and revise the plan, as needed

Employment and Independent Living



ADULT AGENCY SERVICES

It is very important that you know that, once you graduate, this entitlement to services ends.

Once you leave high school, it is possible that you will require the services and support provided by an adult service agency. There are many such agencies and the types of individuals they serve and range of services they provide are varied. It is not possible to provide the details on all of these programs in this planner. General resource information regarding adult agency services is contained at the back of this planner to get you started. However, here is some important information that you need to be aware of in order to understand the difference between educational services and adult programs.

While still in high school, students are entitled to educational services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Being entitled to educational services means that the school system must provide services to meet the student's educational needs. It is very important that you know that, once you graduate, this entitlement to services ends.

If an adult needs certain services, he or she must be determined eligible for those services. For instance, an individual may want job placement services. Vocational Rehabilitation provides these services, but only if the person meets certain eligibility requirements.

An individual wishing to receive residential or vocational services from the Developmental Disabilities System will not automatically receive these services, as he or she must meet their specific eligibility requirements and funding must be available. Similarly, services from other agencies such as the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired are available only to eligible persons.

Even if it is not certain whether you will need additional services after completing high school, it is advised that these be considered as early as possible. Age 16 is not too early! It is important to know whether or not you will be eligible in order to make plans.

Every service system has a different set of requirements for eligibility, so if you don't meet the criteria for one agency, application may need to be made elsewhere.

It is also important to know that services or funding for services may not be readily available and you may have to wait for them. Inquiring about services and making connections early may make the difference in getting services when you need them.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services



What is Vocational Rehabilitation?

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation (Voc Rehab) is an employment program for people with disabilities. Voc Rehab helps these individuals make career plans, learn job skills, and get and keep a job. The goal is to prepare people for jobs where they can make a living wage and have access to medical insurance.

What is the role of Voc Rehab in transition planning?

Voc Rehab works with students with disabilities to prepare for life after graduation. To help these students plan for their future, Voc Rehab works with schools across Nebraska to provide services through the Transition Program. Voc Rehab's role is primarily one of planning and helping to identify appropriate post-school goals and needed supports. Involvement with Voc Rehab can begin in the early years of high school. Voc Rehab staff may:

- Provide information to students and parents
- Help guide students toward appropriate employment goals
- Consult with educators on individual students
- Collaborate with schools to provide group vocational services such as employer tours.

What is Voc Rehab's Employment Program?

Some students will require intensive vocational services, often with costs, during their last year of high school and beyond. These students may be served in Voc Rehab's Employment Program. Voc Rehab staff will determine the student's eligibility for the program and work with the students, parents, and educators to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

Note that the IPE is different from a plan with a similar-sounding name, the IEP (Individual Education Program), that is developed by the school. However, the transition plan developed during high school through the IEP should provide the foundation for the development of the IPE for Voc Rehab services.

Examples of services that may be provided under the Employment Program include: vocational evaluations, career counseling, benefits analysis, college tours and planning for college, on-the-job training and evaluations, training in job seeking skills, or job placement assistance.

Students who are eligible for the Employment Program typically enter this program during the second semester of their junior year and continue through 90 days of successful employment.

Depending on their individual needs, the student may be in the Employment Program for months or years, as would be the case with a student who is receiving post-secondary education.

Who is eligible?

Students with a disability who have an Individual Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan may be eligible to participate in Voc Rehab services while still in school. Voc Rehab also serves adults and students who leave school before graduation. Voc Rehab staff will need to determine eligibility for these programs. Students wishing to receive services who are blind or visually impaired may apply to the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Information regarding this agency is located on page 39 of this planner.

How do I get more information?

Contact Vocational Rehabilitation in Lincoln at 1-402-471-3644 or call toll free at 1-877-637-3422. You may obtain information on the Voc Rehab Service Office in your area by calling these numbers, by accessing the Service Office listing on the web at: <http://www.vocrehab.state.ne.us/vr/office.html>, or by referring to the office locations listing at the end of this planner.

Developmental Disabilities System Services

What is the Developmental Disabilities System?

The Developmental Disabilities System (DDS) is an agency within the Nebraska Health and Human Services System. DDS is responsible for the system of services in Nebraska for persons with developmental disabilities. While DDS does not directly deliver services, it provides the funding and oversight of community-based providers of these services.

What services are provided for persons with developmental disabilities?

Services funded through the Developmental Disabilities System include:

- **Service Coordination** – working with the individual and their family to develop plans for meeting the individual's needs.
- **Day/Vocational Services** – services designed to assist in becoming employed. Services may range from supporting the person in a job in the community to teaching job skills in a sheltered setting.

- **Residential Services** – services designed to assist the individual in living in the community. Services may be provided in the person's home or in supervised settings in the community.
- **Respite** – services to provide occasional relief to the family from the day-to-day care and supervision of the individual.

Who is eligible?

There are specific eligibility requirements an individual must meet in order to be eligible for services through the Developmental Disabilities System. The person must have a diagnosis of a developmental disability. This can include a diagnosis of mental retardation or a severe chronic disability other than mental retardation or mental illness that occurs before the age of 22 years, results in a mental or physical impairment that is not caused by mental illness, is likely to continue indefinitely, and results in substantial limitation in three or more areas of functioning.

Eligibility is determined by DDS staff. Additionally, the amount of funding for services that a person is eligible for is determined by an assessment process based upon the person's abilities and needs.

Is there an age requirement?

Currently in Nebraska, individuals who have been determined eligible may receive day services once they've reached age 21 and have left the school system. In certain situations, youth may be eligible for other services before age 21.

Is there a cost for services?

Each individual receiving services through the Developmental Disabilities System is required to complete an assessment that determines their ability to pay for the cost of the services received. For youth under age 19, the parents' ability to pay must be assessed.

How do I get more information?

Information can be obtained by contacting the Developmental Disabilities System Central Office in Lincoln at (402) 479-5110. You may be referred to a DDS Service Coordination office in your area for a determination of eligibility. Information may also be found on their website at <http://www.hhs.state.ne.us/dip/dipindex.htm>.

Behavioral Health Services

What is the system for behavioral health services in Nebraska?

The Nebraska Health and Human Services System's Division of Behavioral Health Services contracts with six Regional Behavioral Health Networks across the state to ensure access to mental health and substance abuse services for all Nebraskans. The Regions contract with local community-based providers of services to meet the needs of individuals that promote services close to their home and support system. Additional services are provided in the state-operated Regional Centers for those with serious and persistent mental illness in need of acute inpatient or secure residential services.

What services are provided for youth with mental health needs?

Services offered in Nebraska include inpatient treatment, day treatment, therapeutic group homes, therapeutic foster care, home-based services, specialized therapeutic consultation and respite care.

One of the programs developed to serve children and adolescents with serious emotional disturbances is the Professional Partner Program. The mission of this program is to use the wrap-around approach to coordinate services and supports for the families of children with serious emotional/behavioral problems.

In the Professional Partner program, a service coordinator (also referred to as the Professional Partner), works with each youth and family to assist with:

- Comprehensive assessment based on the strengths and needs of the youth, family, and community;
- Development of a team selected by the family that includes professionals and non-professionals;
- Development of an Individual Family Supports Plan (IFSP) with strength-based strategies to address needs;
- Monitoring of the implementation of the plan;
- Purchasing of formal and informal services and supports; and
- Monitoring the outcomes of the services and supports and providing feedback to the team.

Who is eligible?

Mental health services are designed for individuals and their families who have a serious and persistent mental illness that can create lifetime disabilities, and in some cases make the individuals dangerous to themselves or others.

Services are also designed for people experiencing acute, serious mental illnesses, which in some cases may cause a life threatening event. There are specific eligibility criteria that an individual must meet, depending upon the service that is being requested.

How do I get more information?

Information may be obtained by contacting the Nebraska Health and Human Services System's Behavioral Health central office at (402) 479-5166.





General Resources

Answers4Families provides information, opportunities for dialogue, education, and support to Nebraskans with special needs and their families by developing and providing Internet resources. Visit the website at www.answers4families.org or call 1-800-746-8420.

Client Assistance Program (CAP) assists with questions and concerns regarding services from Vocational Rehabilitation, Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Centers for Independent Living and Worknet. CAP may be contacted by calling 1-800-742-7594 or in Lincoln at (402) 471-3656 or by e-mail at victoria.rasmussen@cap.ne.gov. Visit the website at <http://www.cap.state.ne.us>.

Hotline for Disability Services assists with questions and concerns related to disability issues, as well as providing information regarding disability resources. The Hotline may be contacted by calling 1-800-742-7594 or in Lincoln at (402) 471-0801 or by e-mail at shari.bahensky@cap.ne.gov. Resource listings are available at <http://www.cap.state.ne.us> by clicking on "Search the Hotline for Disability Services."

"Making It Work" – This publication, produced by Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation, provides information regarding transition planning. It is intended for students with disabilities and their families. To view the publication or receive a free subscription, contact Vocational Rehabilitation toll free at 1-877-637-3422 or visit the website at <http://www.vocrehab.state.ne.us> and click on "Publications".

Nebraska Educational Assistive Technology (NEAT) is a statewide service that provides technical assistance, training, resources, and funding coordination for the use of assistive technology devices. Information may be obtained by visiting the NEAT website at <http://www.at4all.com/welcome.aspx>, by calling (308) 784-4525 or by e-mail at neatcenter@esu10.org.

Nebraska Childfind is an information and referral service for children ages 0-21. Answers to education-related questions about rights, resources, and responsibilities may be obtained by calling 1-888-806-6287 or by e-mail at steve.miller@atp.ne.gov. Visit their website at: <http://www.nde.ne.gov/ATP/childfind.asp>.

Nebraska Department of Education Transition website contains information regarding transition and transition initiatives in the state. Topics addressed include re-evaluation issues for transition students, graduation readiness, drivers evaluation and training, etc. Visit the site at <http://www.nde.state.ne.us> and click on "Special Education" and then "Transition".

Parent Training and Information of Nebraska (PTI)

is a statewide resource with Parent Professionals available to offer training and information for families of children with disabilities. Further information may be found at <http://www.pti-nebraska.org> or by calling toll free at 1-800-284-8520.

Adult Service Agencies

Behavioral Health Services –

Information regarding behavioral health services available in Nebraska may be obtained by calling the Nebraska Health and Human Services System at (402) 479-5166.

Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired –

Information regarding rehabilitation services for persons who are blind and visually impaired may be obtained by calling the main office at 1-877-809-2419 or by visiting the website at: <http://www.ncbvi.ne.gov>.

Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing –

Information regarding this state agency, which is designed to provide information and referral services for individuals who are hearing impaired, may be obtained on the website at <http://www.ncdhh.ne.gov> or by calling 1-800-545-6244.

Developmental Disabilities

System Services – Information regarding Nebraska's Developmental Disabilities System (DDS) services may be obtained by contacting the Health and Human Services System. Call (402) 471-8715 or visit their website at <http://www.hhs.state.ne.us/dip/dipindex.htm>.

League of Human Dignity –

Information regarding Independent Living Centers, housing, accessibility, transportation, assistive technology, and other services may be obtained by calling the Lincoln office at 1-888-508-4758, the Omaha office at 1-800-843-5784, or the Norfolk office at 1-800-843-5785 or by visiting the website at: <http://www.leagueofhumandignity.com>.

Vocational Rehabilitation

Services – Information regarding Nebraska's Vocational Rehabilitation Services may be obtained by contacting the state's Central Office toll free at 1-877-637-3422 or visiting the website found at: <http://www.vocrehab.state.ne.us>.

Workforce Development of

Nebraska – provides job referral and placement, career counseling and other services for persons with disabilities. For more information, call (402) 471-2275 or visit their website at <http://www.dol.state.ne.us/nwd>.

Post-Secondary Education

The Educational Opportunities Beyond High School in

Nebraska – a website designed to aid secondary students in selecting a post-secondary education institution. The site includes a comprehensive listing of post-secondary training and educational programs available in Nebraska. Each listing provides information needed for post-secondary planning with emphasis on accommodations and special provisions available to students with disabilities. The web address is: <http://edweblab.unl.edu/edopportunities/intro.html>.

“Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education: Know Your Rights and Responsibilities” –

a publication of the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. To view or receive copies, go to: <http://ed.gov/ocr/transition.html> or call toll-free at 1-877-433-7827.

WIN-AHEAD (Western Iowa and Nebraska Association of Higher Education and Disabilities) –

an organization composed of disability service providers at two-year and four-year public and private colleges and universities in Nebraska and Iowa. Information for students transitioning from high school to the post-secondary level may be obtained on the website at <http://www.ahead.org/index.htm>, or by calling (704) 947-7779 or by e-mail at ahead@ahead.org.



Advocacy and Support

American Council of the Blind is a statewide organization committed to improving the living conditions of blind and visually impaired individuals. Information can be obtained by calling toll free 1-888-218-8061 or on the web at <http://www.acb.org/nebraska>.

Arc of Nebraska is a non-profit corporation committed to helping children and adults with disabilities secure the opportunity to choose and realize their goals of where and how they learn, live, work, and play. Information may be obtained by calling (402) 475-4407 or by accessing their website at <http://www.arc-nebraska.org>.

Autism Society of Nebraska provides information and referral services for individuals with autism and related disorders and their families. Call (402) 472-4346 and 1-877-375-0120 or access the website at <http://www.autismnebraska.org> for more information.

Learning Disabilities Association of Nebraska provides support and information regarding individuals with learning disabilities. They may be reached by calling (402) 348-1567 or by e-mail at ldaofneb@yahoo.com. Other information regarding learning disabilities may be found on the Learning Disabilities Association of America's website at <http://www.ldanatl.org>.

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill – Nebraska is an organization providing education, advocacy, and mutual support for those whose lives have been touched by mental illness. Information may be obtained by calling 1-877-463-6264 or on the web at <http://www.nami.org/sites/ne>.

National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska provides information, referral, advocacy, and outreach services for individuals who are blind. They may be contacted by calling (402) 477-7711 or 1-866-254-6347. Additional information may be found on the website at <http://nfbn.inebraska.com>.

Nebraska Advocacy Services is the state's designated protection and advocacy agency. They work to protect and advocate for the human and legal rights of Nebraskans with developmental, mental, and physical disabilities. They may be reached by calling 1-800-422-6691 or by e-mail at info@nebraskaadvocacyservices.org. Information may also be found at: <http://www.nebraskaadvocacy-services.org>.

Nebraska Family Support Network provides information, referral, education, support, and advocacy for families who have children with serious emotional, behavioral, or mental disorders. They may be reached by calling 1-800-245-6081.

United Cerebral Palsy of Nebraska provides information, referral and services to persons with cerebral palsy and their families. Information may be obtained by calling (402) 502-3572 or toll free at 1-800-729-2556.

Vocational Rehabilitation Office Locations

COLUMBUS SERVES:

Butler, Colfax, Nance, Platte and Polk
3020 18th Street, Suite 2, Columbus, NE 68601
(402) 562-8065 V/TT, (877) 505-0866 V/TT
E-mail: vr.columbus@vr.ne.gov

FREMONT SERVES:

Dodge
2951 North Clarkson Street, Fremont, NE 68025
(402) 727-2900 V, (888) 585-5439 V
E-mail: vr.fremont@vr.ne.gov

GRAND ISLAND SERVES:

Adams, Clay, Fillmore, Greeley, Hall,
Hamilton, Howard, Merrick, Nuckolls, Thayer,
Webster, York
3335 West Capital Avenue,
Grand Island, NE 68803
(308) 385-6200 V/TT, (800) 862-3382 V/TT
E-mail: vr.grandisland@vr.ne.gov

KEARNEY SERVES:

Blaine, Buffalo, Custer, Franklin, Furnas,
Garfield, Harlan, Kearney, Loup, Phelps,
Sherman, Valley
2916 West 24th Street, Kearney, NE 68845
(308) 865-5343 V/TT, (800) 262-3382 V/TT
E-mail: vr.kearney@vr.ne.gov

LINCOLN SERVES:

Gage, Jefferson, Johnson, Lancaster,
Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Richardson, Saline,
Saunders, Seward
5143 South 48th Street, Lincoln, NE 68516
(402) 471-3231 V, (402) 471-6341 TT,
(800) 472-3382 V/TT
E-mail: vr.lincoln@vr.ne.gov

NORFOLK SERVES:

Antelope, Boone, Boyd, Brown, Burt, Cedar,
Cumming, Dixon, Holt, Keya Paha, Knox,
Madison, Pierce, Rock, Stanton, Wayne, Wheeler
1212 Benjamin Avenue, Norfolk, NE 68701
(402) 370-3200 V/TT, (800) 442-3382 V/TT
E-mail: vr.norfolk@vr.ne.gov

NORTH PLATTE SERVES:

Arthur, Chase, Cherry, Dawson, Dundy,
Frontier, Gosper, Grant, Hayes, Hitchcock,
Hooker, Keith, Lincoln, Logan, McPherson,
Perkins, Red Willow, Thomas
200 South Silber, Bldg. #2,
North Platte, NE 69101
(308) 535-8100 V/TT, (800) 272-3382 V/TT
E-mail: vr.northplatte@vr.ne.gov

OMAHA SERVES:

Cass, Douglas, Sarpy, Washington.
1313 Farnam on the Mall, Omaha, NE 68102
(402) 595-2100 V, (402) 595-2107 TT,
(800) 554-3382
E-mail: vr.omaha@vr.ne.gov

OMAHA WEST SERVES:

Dodge, Douglas
12011 Q Street, Omaha, NE 68137
(402) 595-1212 V/TT, (877) 240-4445 V/TT
E-mail: vr.omahawest@vr.ne.gov

SCOTTSBLUFF SERVES:

Banner, Box Butte, Cheyenne, Dawes,
Deuel, Garden, Kimball, Morrill, Scotts Bluff,
Sheridan, Sioux
1517 Broadway, Suite 131, Scottsbluff, NE 69361
(308) 632-1321 V/TT, (800) 292-3382 V/TT
E-mail: vr.scottsbluff@vr.ne.gov

SOUTH SIOUX CITY SERVES:

Dakota, Thurston
901 West 21st Street, Suite 1
South Sioux City, NE 68776
(402) 494-2265 V/TT, (877) 659-7899 V/TT
E-mail: vr.southsioux@vr.ne.gov

If you have any questions or concerns contact:
Vocational Rehabilitation
301 Centennial Mall South, P.O. Box 94987
Lincoln, NE 68509
(402) 471-3644 V/TT, (877) 637-3422 V/TT
E-mail: vr.stateoffice@vr.ne.gov



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